

VISION AND PROJECT OF THE SOCIAL SPACE Reconfiguration of the Tiberius Bridge basin in Rimini

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ABSTRACT

In 2010 Rimini adopted a strategic plan whose main purpose, in addition to the redevelopment of the suburbs and the hinterland, is to strengthen the role of the historic center through the recovery of distinctive public buildings and restoring the dignity of the various forgotten urban spaces. The Tiberio 3 project, this is how the recent project for the reconfiguration of the spaces pertaining to the basin of the Tiberius Bridge (14 AD) was called, is located in this climate of regeneration. The place is characterized by a strong archaeological context and by an urban palimpsest that has seen the succession of important transformations. The survey carried out through discussions with technicians and designers, aims to highlight the relationship between the park and the city as the central theme of the intervention; identifying the socio-cultural influences and the design implications of urban solutions aimed at expressing the values of a constantly evolving society.

KEYWORDS

contemporary city, regeneration, social space, landscape

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The recent phenomena triggered by the worldwide health emergency are the base of a renewed reflection by architectural culture on the role of the urban project in the city transformation processes and more specifically on the definition of social space. The repercussions of these phenomena, in addition to the health plan, affect, in a local dimension, the city social structure connected to the living space intended as a physical place and support for life and exchange between the people who cross it. The mechanisms designed to face the spread of the Covid-19 virus have mainly affected social behaviours, inducing distancing, avoiding the formation of gatherings in closed places but also outdoors and in the most critical phase, excluding the possibility of travel and to enjoy public places.

These restrictive measures have pointed out a series of questions relating to the quality of the spaces in which we live. First, it was during the 'lockdown' phase that the limits of domestic environments emerged. Inevitably, people recognized that the quality of these private spaces is linked not only to their size but above all to the flexibility and the opportunity to create divided environments that can accommodate different functions from work to study, from game to physical activity. Natural light, as well as the presence of greenery and connected external spaces (gardens, internal courtyards, terraces, balconies) has assumed particular importance for psychophysical well-being. At a later stage, attention shifted from dwell to the city. The difficulties experienced within the private residences have re-emerged, on a larger scale, in the cities, leading to the experimentation of concrete problems, until now only intuitions related to the lack, but above all to the quality of public spaces.

The interest in the recent intervention carried out in Rimini fits into this context, proposing itself as a model in a balance between tradition and openness to future scenarios. This essay focuses on the presentation of the project of an urban space characterized by the strong archaeological presence of a Roman bridge and by the particular relationship through which it reconnects different parts of the city, establishing a singular case study for its ability to respond to people needs, for its relationship with history and with the changing social needs. The city, as a place for the stratification of the signs left by the succession of communities and different generations, is assumed as an expression of collective identity and historical memory. The new transformations overlap the traces of the previous mutations; as in a palimpsest, the text deposited over time by the work of man is scratched away to make room for a new one that responds to contemporary needs and which is bearer of new meanings (Corboz, 1998). According to Gregotti (1966), the city represents the most notable effort by human civilization for a complete transformation of the natural environment, the most radical transition from the state of nature to the state of culture with the creation of the 'microclimate' particularly suitable for the development of some fundamental relationships for human life.

Starting from the assumption that the space is not given, but it belongs to the community and constitutes its most direct and genuine representation, the territory can be seen as the result of a choral work, produced through a dialogue, a relationship between

man and nature along the time of history. Focusing on the European city, we can see how the processes of modification are influenced by the tension between a general resistance to transformations, linked to the conservation of cultural heritage, and the need for a regeneration that responds to emerging social demands. Preserving the physical and cultural identity of the city is an essential issue that raises numerous questions when this dual phenomenon becomes a symptom of the vulnerability of the city itself. In this regard, Raffaele Federici emphasizes that the future exists, as a project, only where it is possible to creatively recompose the elements that constitute the social, cultural and economic fabric of a given space, beyond the possible exploitation of the logic of interest. The future, according to Federici, exists as the attitude of a given geographical context to produce wellness, not only financial, for the local community (Federici, 2020). The definition of an integrated development plan, through a careful analysis of the social phenomena that trigger the processes of urban transformation, is an opportunity to convert the vulnerabilities present in the area into a potential regeneration agent.

The Strategic Plan: projections for the future of the city of Rimini | Since 2010, the city of Rimini has equipped itself with an important urban planning tool through which to guide the development processes of the territory. The Strategic Plan consists of observations aimed at a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the city, through actions of intervention at different scales, in the medium and long term. The document shared between the institutional bodies and the representatives of the economic, social and cultural associations of the territory. It foresees the gradual development of specific projects in different fields of intervention: from urban planning to social, from culture to business from tourism to landscape enhancement.

The Strategic Plan focuses on the consolidated city, in the awareness that it is precisely the best quality of the existing that represents the most important challenge for the future of the city. Urban regeneration is the main strategy among those implemented by the Plan and is achieved by interpreting the demands of contemporary society through a way of thinking in a sustainable and integrated way both physical and social space. The response to growth needs acts according to the principles of densification and regeneration of urban voids, abstaining from the consumption of new surfaces. Public space and green areas play a key role in the vision of a better-connected city. The public space network is functional to the organization of the city and the neighbourhood precisely because it joins the places of daily life, the services, the collective equipment, with the places of living and working. The open spaces quality is at the base of the city regenerative process, not only because it ensures movement and leisure, but precisely because it is the very essence of the urban landscape.¹

The Plan observation objects are those places that, for a long time, have remained devoid of functions and roles; places that have lost their physiognomy due to the disso-



Figg. 1, 2 | XXV April Park, Rimini (credits: G. Corda, 2019).

lution of the relationship between their physical form and the social character of the activities and inhabitants but which, even now, are repositories of collective memory. One of the selected areas is the Porto Canale system, a water axis that connects the sea to the historic centre and ends in the basin below the ancient Tiberius Bridge, a Roman monument (14 AD). The area, which includes a large public entrance to the park, has recently been returned to the city through a major redevelopment intervention (Figg. 1, 2).

The new square on the water | The studies for the area surrounding the Tiberius Bridge began in 2014 following the designation of the new manager of Anthea, a municipality affiliated company in charge of the management of Rimini's green areas and public heritage maintenance. The assignment of the task is an important phase of the project; all the projects included in the Strategic Plan, in fact, were entirely managed by the Municipal Technical Office. In this occasion, it was Anthea's manager Andrea Succi who delegated the design part to the landscape architect Marialuisa Cipriani, relying on her also for the construction of the project. All the bodies responsible for the heritage protection have been involved in a dialogue and in a path of sharing that accompanied the project in all its phases. Succi puts in place a series of actions aimed at realizing the vision of the area as a place suited to becoming a centre of the city and together with Marialuisa Cipriani (2018) they build a path of consultation that involves a plurality of professionals and specialized offices. The area, which is configured as a very delicate part of the city, has numerous constraints. A dialogue is triggered on the area that affects the archaeological, the landscape and the monumental superintendence, the basin technical service, the basin authorities, the maintainers and managers of the area. The discussion on the guidelines of the project extends to all stages of progress through the sharing of choices and the collection of requests by the parties involved.²

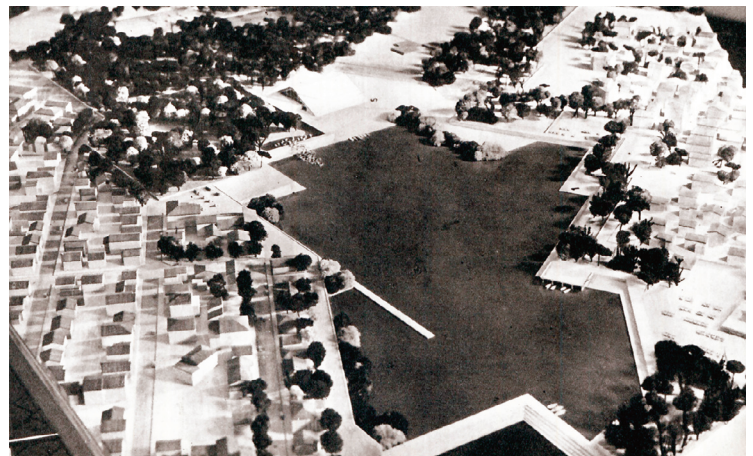
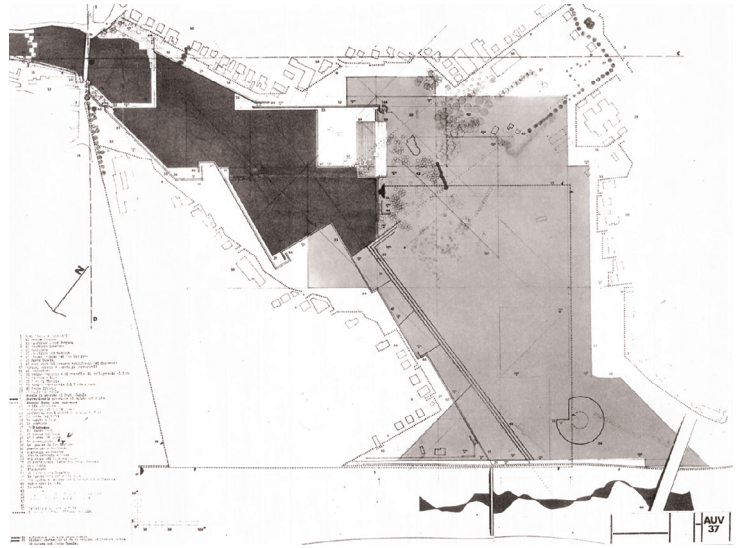
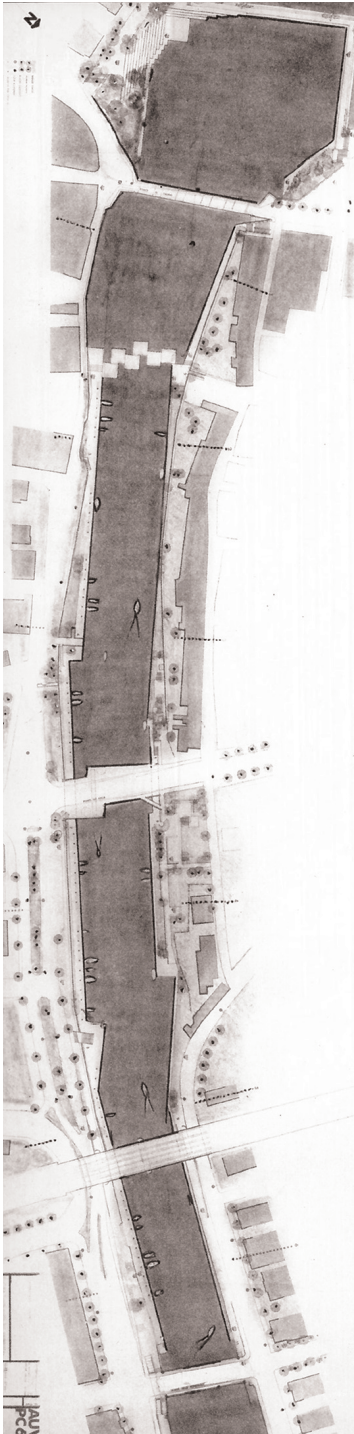
From the pier to the park to the river: a settlement continuum | The intervention insists on an area of about 7,000 square meters around the basin overlooked by the

Tiberius Bridge. The identity of the place is linked to the strong presence of Roman archaeology, to that of the medieval walls and the canal: the break element between the historic centre and the adjacent San Giuliano village. Its conformation is due to a series of interventions, implemented over the course of the twentieth century, aimed at the control and safety of the Marecchia and the Ausa rivers. The low altimetric level and the presence of two torrential rivers, in the tangency of the city centre, give rise to considerable territorial fragility³. The area indeed is subject to flooding. This problem was solved between 1927 and 1938 thanks to the construction of an artificial canal, called 'scolmatore', from which the rivers water flow into the sea in the northern area of San Giuliano. This operation, in addition to establishing a new relationship between the city and the river, leads to the desiccation and liberation from the hydraulic roles of large areas near the historic centre.

The fluvial nature of the land prevents its occupation, leading to its abandonment and its relative state of decay until the 1970s when the redevelopment project by the Milanese architect Vittoriano Viganò defines a new layout of the area, which persisted until today. Securing the old riverbed from the building boom of the 1950s allows it to support the growth of rich riparian vegetation. It soon becomes clear that these green areas constitute a precious reserve because of their compensatory properties against an at least unbalanced urban settlement trend.

Viganò's intervention, carried out between 1969 and 1982, aims to respond to a series of problems through a unitary project that affects the entire water system in a settlement continuum that connects the marine landscape, the urban landscape and that of the hinterland. The edges of the Porto Canale are defined with the construction of a water-level promenade on continuous longitudinal quays equipped with platforms and panoramic points. The canal connects the pier on the waterfront to the ancient Roman bridge, defining a large water basin that originally had to continue in the park, in the form of an artificial lake, up to the river, reconnecting inland (Viganò, 1975). The Lake was an essential unit in the system, necessary for the vivification of the canal water and the bridge protection from potential floods. The intervention designed by Viganò proposed the construction of an artificial landscape, functional to the particular use of leisure in a large open space, interpreting the Marecchia green-water system as a unit of which it highlights the specific environmental role as the green lung of the city (Viganò, 1990). Through the water mirror artifice, the image of the Roman bridge is symbolically and functionally redeemed (Figg. 3-5).

The missed construction of the accumulation basin leaves the park design incomplete and the area exposed to flooding due to the rising sea with the consequent deterioration of the basin edges and the weakening of the surrounding vegetation. Punctual and uncoordinated interventions, aimed at ensuring the safety and accessibility of the area, over time have ended up compromising the image of the area. The presence of furnishings, installations and artefacts not suited to the importance of the archaeological site gives the idea of a degraded place. The area, located at a lower level than the



Figg. 3-5 | Vittoriano Viganò, XXV April Park, Rimini 1975 (source: Viganò, 1975).

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Figg. 6, 7 | Small square in San Giuliano village, Rimini (credits: G. Corda, 2019).

city, is identified as a residual space, indeterminate and devoid of a specific functional program, therefore underused and perceived with indifference.

The response to local needs through the design of open space | In the Strategic Plan vision, the Tiberius Bridge ambit was to become a new attractive pole for the city, through the implementation of actions aimed at enhancing archaeology as a focal element and centre of the urban scene. The centrality and attractiveness of the place are not sought through the use of scenic effects and the spectacular show off of the ruin. The intervention aims, on the other hand, to restore a unitary image concerning the monumental context. The first operation was to clean up the elements inconsistent with the place nature. It was a question of recognizing the presences belonging to the place and those that the place was not able to accept and which therefore constituted an interference in the landscape.

The project, edited in a single conceptual solution, was implemented in two successive excerpts. The first phase involves the redevelopment and arrangement of the 900 square metres area on the edge of the bridge on the side of San Giuliano village. Space, formerly intended for parking, was reorganized by defining a small square furnished with seats, lighting and illustrative panels that narrate the bridge story. The second section reinterprets the particular morphology of the park through the reshaping of the embankments and their arrangement for transit and rest; the setting of the route and access system; the inclusion of privileged visual points of the bridge on the edge of the basin with a large rest area and a promenade; the introduction of lighting systems with optic fibre connection cable (Figg. 6, 7).

A third unrealized excerpt included the setting of an archaeological garden in which to place the ancient stones of the bridge. This phase was part of the project built with the participation of the Archaeological Superintendency. The predisposition for future accommodation of the ancient Roman remains is still planned. Viganò intervention on the area included strong architectural choices that over time have become consolidated

and historicized signs in the image of the city. The project works on optimizing the assimilated function of the place as an urban park and occasional theatre of events, setting itself two fundamental goals. First, there is the assumption of the bridge as the central element of the scene; this meant that the interventions implemented should not dominate the image of the bridge. The materials and the sign adopt a minimal and contemporary language that detaches them from archaeology and makes them recognizable emphasizing their historical and monumental value.

The second goal is to give the existing use of the area a unitary and clear design. The area had a morphology on which the project worked with a geometric design that reconfigures the slopes by following the inclinations and curves of the terrain. The project aims to ensure maximum fruition of the area, from the city level to that of the water, optimizing the system of routes, reducing interrupted connections and obtaining, from the existing spaces, places for resting and enjoyment of the bridge view. The project adopts an organic design, it does not impose an aprioristic geometric design by superimposing it on the context, but it reinterprets the morphology already present on the area and reveals it through geometric tools. The privileged focal point is the Roman bridge, of which the project ensures its fruition through the views from the different levels of the park (Fig. 8-11).

Lastly, the project takes into account the fact that, beyond the detour and the 'drainage' carried out by Viganò project, the area still constitutes an arm of the Marec-

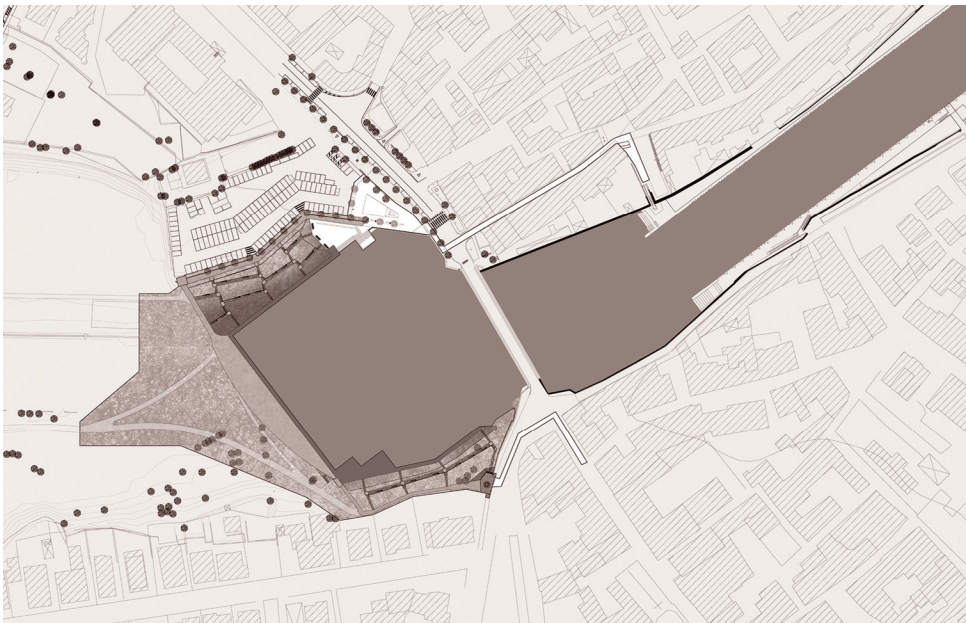


Fig. 8 | Marialuisa Cipriani, Tiberio 3 project, Rimini 2017 (credit: M. Cipriani, 2017).

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Figg. 9-13 | XXV April Park, Tiberius Bridge, Rimini (credits: G. Corda, 2019).

chia river that can be activated in case of overflow. This requires particular attention to ensure that the components adopted resist the passage of water without obstructing its flow and allowing the safe crossing of the park. Water is an important theme of the project. The basin constitutes the head element of the park and is located at a lower altitude than the city, it becomes an important issue of the project to re-establish the relationship with water by making contact possible and transforming it into an element of value rather than a detractor or a danger.

Urban space/social space | The regeneration of the spaces surrounding the Tiberius Bridge arouses interest not only because of the particularly meaningful context or how

the project collaborates to re-emerge the identity image of the place but above all because it is not an isolated project; instead, it is part of an idea of the city that tends towards the definition of an overall urban project. Regeneration comes from a clear overview that restores value to the porous areas of the built city, promoting their growth from within. The residual voids, the discontinuous spaces, scattered fragmentarily within the urban fabric, are identified as a resource through which to trigger the sustainable development of the city. The voids contain a latent potential. These, as project material, are the basis of the generation of new spatial matrices which, like connective tissue, re-establish the dialogue between the parts of the city, the territory and the landscape.

According to Bernardo Secchi, the void is a design theme that cannot easily be traced back to conceptually simple solutions: to preserve, to renovate, to reuse, to promote. The difficulties are not only in finding adequate and proportionate functions, in an accurate exploration of the probable, as well as in identifying their possible meaning. The design of the void begins with its theming and this requires an expansion of the observation field (Secchi, 1984). The void referred acquire significance in its being an interval between different elements from which it derives its qualities. Working on the city voids requires an approach aimed at searching for the spatial continuity of a systemic context. To change a place it may be necessary to act on another. The urban landscape is a dynamic system that changes and evolves; rather than acting in contrast it is necessary to understand the reasons behind its transformation. During all the project phases, formalism gives way to the ability to think about a complex metabolic functioning in which every choice, every sign is verified on the spot. The project is not intended to impose its image on the ground but to interpret the place features, to understand the energies that determine its functioning and create a desire for transformation that fits into the flow of these same energies.

Conclusions | The square on the water is configured as a public and urban space, capable of attracting and at the same time perceptually extending its presence beyond its physical boundaries. The character of the place, strongly steeped in history, constitutes a fundamental piece of the city, the fulcrum between the arrival point of the Via Emilia and the first village outside the city walls; the link between the valley, the river, the historic centre, the canal and the sea. These are the aspects that contribute to defining the place identity, meaningful and rich in historical memory.

The project, winner of the City Brand&Tourism Landscape Award 2018, interprets the place identity through an unveiling operation that returns the image of a space that belongs to the city, a pivotal place that establishes new morphological, functional and perceptive relationships between the elements of a part of the city. The square becomes the compositional tool that gives order and readability to the various urban facts and to the different and isolated architectures which, through the structured presence of the water basin and the surrounding spaces, acquire meaning and recognition.

The redevelopment of the basin area takes place without determining a specific function for the spaces. Unlike what happens in the architectural project, in which the function is fundamental to establish the building role, in the open spaces design, the elements involved already contain an implicit function: a square, a street, a park are already prefigured entities and appointed to perform a specific task in the catalogue of the elements composing the urban fabric (Cipriani, 2015).

The regeneration of the Tiberius bridge surrounding spaces takes place precisely according to this idea for which the attractiveness of the place is not determined by the insertion of elements or scenic devices but through interventions aimed at making the place welcoming, revealing freedom and opportunities in which the functional aspect is secondary to the awareness of what the place can offer (Figg. 12, 13). The spaces of the new square on the water are the result of an intervention on a delicate place which, instead of clashing with the limits set by the protection bodies, was developed through a coordinated action in which each figure contributed to the definition of the most appropriate response to the local conditions.

The municipality played a fundamental role in the development of the intervention by inserting it among the strategic actions aimed at redeveloping the area and identifying the place as a node through which to reconnect detached parts of the city. There are no schemes or strategies that guarantee the success of a project if not the very fact that the result does not consist in a beautiful design or in the capacity to arouse wonder, but in the ability that this has to welcome life. What in the past was a place of passage to which little attention was paid after the new intervention, soon became inhabited by people. The square on the water has continued to be, even in recent periods characterized by the health emergency and the necessary social distancing, a theatre for musical events, gardening exhibitions, an outdoor gym and a location for art installations and much more.

It must be recognized that designing open spaces does not simply mean defining the design of the ground and the void between buildings, it requires a structured knowledge capable of working with the social fabric, interpreting intangible needs and responding to the local community desires. Each place, each city has its history, its memory and a way of being perceived that reverberates through different social dynamics. The social phenomena at the base of the transformation processes change from one part of the city to another and represent a fundamental component that becomes the theme of the project.

The public space is a civic element which contains the energies necessary for the regenerative process which is fundamental for the quality of the city; its project requires knowledge of the tools directed at building relationships that stimulate their fruition. People represent the litmus, the dimension that allows measuring the real quality of urban spaces. Nowadays urban regeneration should tend to evoke new ways of living in the city. Urban space as a space for leisure must be the interpreter the way of life of contemporary society, its new rhythms, in which the time of leisure, work, culture and

sports mix and overlap. A space open to the different declinations of its ways of use is a space that stimulates the sense of belonging of the community and in which individuals can identify themselves, collaborating in the creation of truly lived-in space, therefore safe and active in improving the quality of life of the community itself.

Notes

1) See Quaderni del Piano Strategico for more details at the webpage: riminiventure.it [Accessed 10 December 2020].

2) This has become an acquired method of the City's Engineering Department adopted in other areas of the Plan as well.

3) Marecchia River floods are not uncommon, but it was in September 1910 that the most critical episode occurred. The river had overstepped its banks and an exceptional mass of water conveyed into the strait of the Canal Port, causing a dangerous overflow at the mouth. The sudden flood swept away part of the city and the town causing huge damages (Masini, 2013).

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